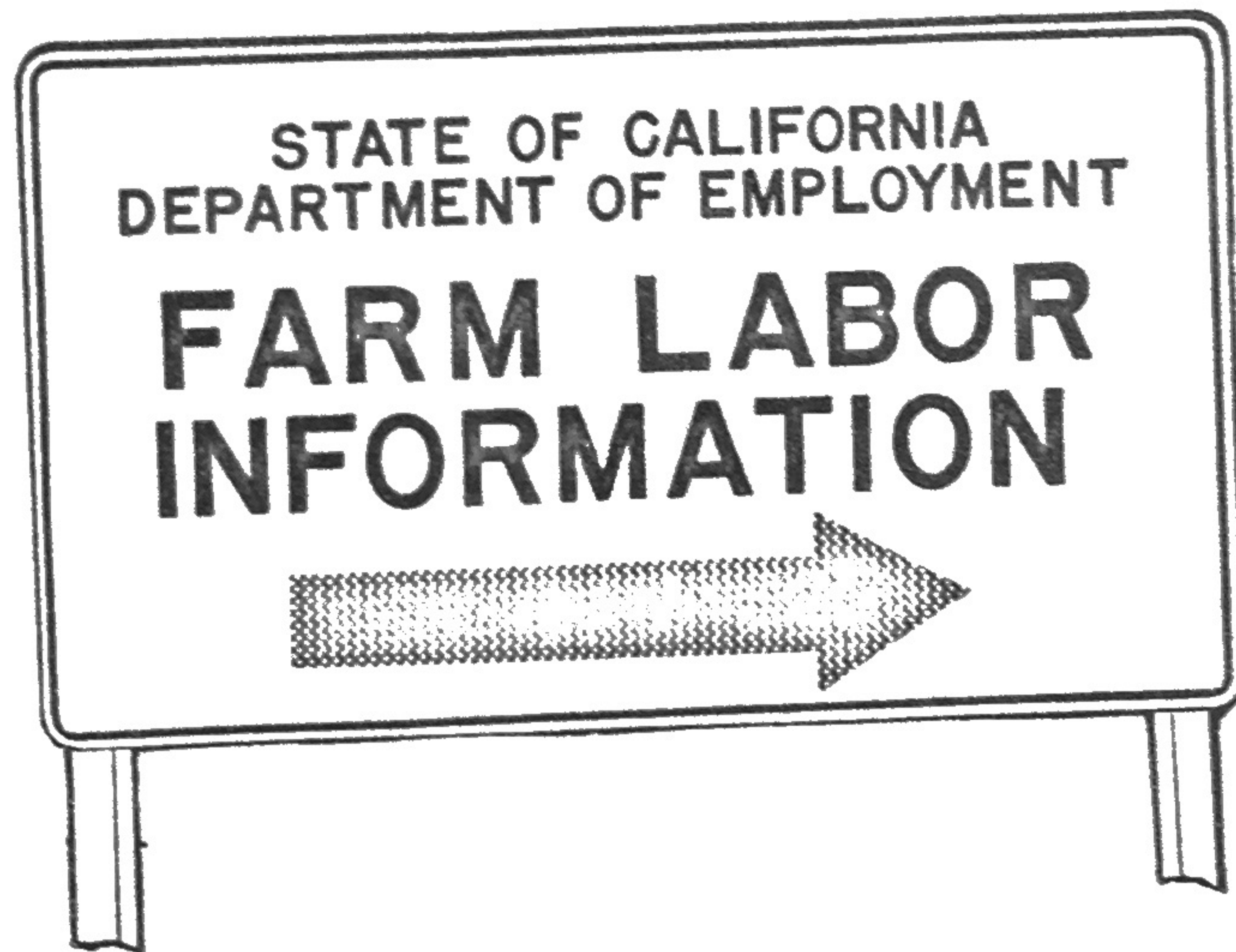


CALIFORNIA

ANNUAL FARM LABOR REPORT

1954



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Employment
Farm Placement Service

TABLE II

C A L I F O R N I A

ESTIMATED NUMBER WORKING ON FARMS - BY MONTHS* 1953 AND 1954

By Type of Worker

Year and month	Total workers	Farmers & unpaid family workers	Hired domestic farm workers			Foreign contract workers Mexican	
			Total hired	Temporary			
				Non-local	Local	Year-round	
<u>1953:</u>							
January	390,000	156,700	216,000	24,000	85,300	106,700	17,300
February	387,000	158,800	209,300	20,000	82,000	107,300	18,900
March	365,500	158,000	189,200	15,200	66,300	107,700	18,300
April	385,000	159,000	205,000	23,500	72,000	109,500	21,000
May	441,000	163,000	250,200	42,600	94,200	113,400	27,800
June	461,500	167,000	266,200	43,700	103,600	118,900	28,300
July	470,500	171,000	273,200	45,200	107,300	120,700	26,300
August	471,000	169,200	274,800	46,500	107,500	120,800	27,000
September	536,000	171,000	329,000	81,800	124,200	123,000	36,000
October	529,000	171,000	318,000	73,500	122,000	122,500	40,000
November	470,000	165,800	277,800	52,000	106,300	119,500	26,400
December	433,000	163,300	251,200	40,500	93,000	117,700	18,500
<u>1954:</u>							
January	412,000	161,000	236,700	32,800	88,200	115,700	14,300
February	393,000	161,000	215,500	23,000	76,500	116,000	16,500
March	386,000	162,200	209,500	23,700	69,800	116,000	14,300
April	409,000	166,300	224,500	30,200	76,000	118,300	18,200
May	464,000	170,000	266,800	44,000	101,800	121,000	27,200
June	482,000	172,800	280,200	45,000	114,200	121,000	29,000
July	485,000	174,600	280,600	43,400	115,200	122,000	29,800
August	491,500	172,800	282,700	47,500	113,500	121,700	36,000
September	543,000	174,000	318,500	69,500	124,700	124,300	50,500
October	538,000	171,700	315,300	62,800	129,000	123,500	51,000
November	470,000	168,200	268,000	38,000	109,000	121,000	33,800
December	442,000	165,500	247,500	33,500	95,000	119,000	29,000

*Mid-month estimates

RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT

1. Recruitment methods, effectiveness, and contributing factors.

1. General. Farm placements in 1954 reached a record total of 522,225. This was 201,147 more than during 1953, representing an increase of nearly 63 percent. It was 61,445, or 13 percent more than in the previous record year of 1951. See Table IV, Page 12.

This striking advancement in service to the agricultural public is attributable to a number of important factors. More staff time was made available for farm placement work. Reorganization September 1 enabled emphasis on farm placement during the peak season. Throughout the year the Department stressed utilization of domestic workers, particularly to reduce dependence on the supplemental Mexican worker. Farmers were encouraged to improve housing or provide day-haul transportation to utilize available domestic farm help. The Immigration Service drive to rid California of Wetbacks resulted in opening many farm jobs for domestic farm workers who were recruited and placed. The removal of Wetbacks, and the Department requirement that individual members of associations contracting legal Mexicans must maintain current orders in farm labor or other local offices, brought an increasing number of farm employers into offices to place orders. This gave offices a firm demand which stimulated aggressive recruitment measures which met with considerable success. Not only were more workers placed, but individual workers were placed in more jobs, thereby extending utilization of available manpower and increasing the earnings of the workers.

The attraction of labor to offices in turn brought in more orders. The result was reactivation of the farm labor market at the center of which the farm labor office operated with new vigor and new prestige.

2. Wetback drive. Before further discussion of labor recruitment, we insert this account of the removal of illegal Mexican workers from California which affected subsequent recruitment.

Inconspicuous among thousands of American-Mexicans, an unknown number of Wetbacks had been employed in agriculture and industry. The Immigration Service had conducted a continuing program of deportation which seemed futile because of the ease of re-entry. Cumulating pressures at local, State, and National levels led to strengthening the Immigration Service for an all-out 1954 drive to rid California of Wetbacks.

Beginning June 17, 1954, the Border Patrol, augmented by some 400 men detailed from other states, and with cooperation by the California Highway Patrol, county sheriffs, city police and the Department of Employment, swept through the State and by the end of September, 83,000 apprehensions had been accomplished. This number was below the 248,000 apprehensions during the period January through May of 1954, but the effectiveness of the summer drive was the accompanying blockade at the Border to stop re-entry. While apprehensions during the early part of the year included many individuals picked up over and over again, the 83,000 probably included considerably less duplication of individuals.

Deported Wetbacks included many who were found in nonagricultural employment, and many who were unemployed, as well as those employed in farm work. Although the Border counties of Imperial and San Diego were most acutely affected, the labor loss was also keenly felt in the interior and coastal districts farther north where removals reduced the farm labor force by probably 20,000 farm hands just before the late summer and fall harvests. Not only were Wetbacks withdrawn from the farms, but also some domestic farm workers left to take nonagricultural jobs vacated by Wetbacks.

Most employers accepted the loss of Wetback labor as an inevitable loss which was not entirely unexpected. Through contacts and publicity by the Farm Placement Service, they had been informed of their responsibilities to American workers and the risks they took in employing Wetbacks. Farm organizations, labor unions, welfare agencies, and public opinion had exerted additional pressure against Wetback hiring.

Following the drive, and although a few Wetbacks were still at large, employers refused them work and took greater precaution against hiring them unknowingly. Formerly, many of the Wetbacks had been in the crews of farm labor contractors, and for this reason some farmers discontinued services of labor contractors and began hiring their own workers through the Farm Placement Service. Some labor contractors who had relied heavily on Wetback labor to fill their crews withdrew from business.

Employers using legally contracted Mexicans welcomed the departure of Wetbacks. They had felt understandable unfairness in adhering to the wage, housing, and other regulations governing legal use of Mexicans, while enighbors using Wetbacks had not been subject to such regulations. The effects of the Wetback removal on the contract Mexican National Program is discussed under the heading of that program, later in this report.

As has been indicated, the removal of Wetbacks opened many farm jobs to domestic farm workers, providing a new demand and a new stimulus to domestic labor recruitment.

3. Day-haul and car pools. The job vacancies resulting from the Wetback drive, the absence of housing in the job areas, and the increased availability of city workers who lacked transportation, made day-hauling the logical means of supplying labor in some parts of the State. There was a sharp increase in day-hauling out of the major labor pools of Los Angeles, Stockton, Sacramento, and the San Francisco Bay Area. The Los Angeles Farm Labor Office reported four times the day-hauling of the preceding year, and one office in Stockton reported a record year. For the State as a whole, pool-type placements, which include most of the day-hauls, practically doubled.

However, shortages of workers or changes in the needs resulted in some curtailment or abandonment of day-haul programs which had operated in preceding years. Also, some day-hauls which had been initiated by the state agency in previous years no longer required supervision except for channeling of workers to pick-up points. See Exhibit D.

The need.

The peak need for contract Mexican Nationals in 1954 reached about 54,000, which was 11,000, or 25 percent above the peak number of 43,000 in 1953. Average employment of Mexican Nationals in 1954 was approximately 29,000, which was only 3,500, or 14 percent above the 1953 average of 25,500. The average employment number working on California farms in 1954.

The major explanation of the increased need for contract Mexican Nationals in 1954, over that of 1953, was the necessity of legalized importations to replace part of the losses in the farm work force resulting from the large scale and effective removal of Wetbacks from California. See Page 11. However, it is notable that the number of these illegal workers removed was several times greater than that represented by the 11,000 increase in legal workers needed at the peak. As has been indicated, domestic workers were channeled into many of the jobs vacated by Wetbacks.

The need for contract Mexican Nationals in 1955 will depend upon the trend in availability of qualified American workers desiring employment in the activities which have required supplemental foreign workers. The future need will also depend upon the success of the Immigration Service in maintaining the Border blockade to prevent the re-entry of Wetbacks.

The Federal method of determining needs for Mexican Nationals required detailed analysis of all seasonal labor needs and labor supplies, by area, two months preceding a future six months' period, necessitating assumptions about many contingencies such as plantings, weather, yields, markets, and other factors. Such assumptions were required even for crops in which there would be little likelihood of need for supplemental labor. The method was found cumbersome. Some farm placement personnel suggested that it seemed more realistic to estimate the shortage requiring Mexican Nationals by analyzing and adding up the few needs, identified from experience and adjusted for outlook.

B. Procurement.

Operation of procurement procedures was more orderly than in any previous year. The speed with which workers could be contracted following the request and authorization, on the ES-366, had two major advantages. It gave the offices more time to recruit domestic workers if possible before approving use of Mexicans, and it tended to make for more realistic requests from employers, as to numbers in relation to the actual immediate need. Employers expressed satisfaction with the promptness in the processing of requests.

During 1954, more than 1,000 ES-366 authorizations were processed, requesting about 78,000 new contracts, 5,000 recontracts, and 68,000 extensions of contracts. However, cancellations and reductions for miscellaneous reasons, resulted in the writing of fewer contracts than these numbers authorized. This illustrates the cooperation of employers in holding the use of supplemental labor to the minimum necessary to assure getting the work done.

C. The employers.

More farmers used contract Mexican Nationals in 1954 than in 1953. This was due primarily to the needs for legal workers by employers who had formerly depended upon Wetbacks. Many farm labor associations reported sharp increases in their memberships after the Wetback drive.

Employers benefited from the Federal reductions in the foreign labor program charges, and from the tightening of the Mexican worker's responsibility for contract fulfillment through allowing some withholding of wages to ease the costs of nonfulfillment.

The farm labor procurement associations were generally well managed and efficient in limiting the association labor pool and distributing the workers among the members for utilization to the best advantage of the employers and workers.

D. The workers.

The contract Mexican National continued to prove himself as an industrious and serious worker, happy for the opportunity of the American work experience and saving his money to further his personal objectives upon returning home to Mexico.

During that period of the year when Border recruitment was permitted at Mexicali, some employers complained that the quality of worker available for contract was not as satisfactory as the worker recruited in the interior of Mexico. In general, however, good workers were available.

E. Compliance.

Regional, State, and local farm placement service staffs and the managers of labor procurement associations, all participated in the encouragement and enforcement of compliance with Public Law 78 as amended. There was commendable cooperation to prevent noncompliance. Charges of noncompliance were investigated and resolved jointly in some instances.

Compliance problems arose primarily among new users who were less familiar with the regulations than past users. In only a very few cases was it necessary to withdraw legal Mexicans because of noncompliance.

The growing availability of qualified domestic workers made it mandatory to see that employers did not by-pass their obligation to hire American workers when available and referred by the employment offices. Considerable publicity, and individual and group contacts by State and local farm placement personnel stressed this obligation.

By a revision in procedure, the State required each employer or member of an association to place an order for workers at the local office in each area preceding and during use of Mexicans. Formerly, domestic workers were referred to the headquarters of many associations, which, in turn, sent them to members. The new procedure made it more convenient for any available workers to be referred directly to nearby farms by the nearest office. The order also gave an office advance notice that Mexicans were to be moved into the area, so that such a movement could be stopped if sufficient domestic workers were available.